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FOREIGN SERVICE DESPATCH

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FROM American Embassy Bonn

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TO THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE, WASHINGTON

May 13, 1959

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SUBJECT Monthly Report Berlin Air Safety Center (BASC) April 1959. Army-4

The following is abstracted from the April report of the U.S. Element of the BASC, received in the Embassy May 7, 1959. One copy of the full report is filed with the Aviation Division, Department of State.

1. ITEMS OF GENERAL INTEREST

(a) A C-130 flight from the Federal Republic to Berlin and return on April 15 was the "high point" of the month. Both the Soviets and Americans maintained the positions taken during the initial C-130 flight in March 1959. The Soviet Element, BASC, protested the altitude of the flight and the U.S. Element, BASC, protested the action of the Soviet fighter aircraft. The Soviet Controllers adopted the attitude of not even wanting the flight plan since their government took no responsibility for the safety of the flight. This stated position did not, however, prevent them from relaying information copied from the flight plan passed to them nor from repeatedly querying the American Controller about the aircraft's position and altitude. The Soviet Controller asked why the Soviet government's guarantee was not necessary and yet the Soviet government was still responsible. The U.S. Chief Controller advised the Soviet Controller that the right to fly the corridors without prior notice was made by previous agreement and that a guarantee of safety of flight is not necessary. Flight plans are passed to the Soviets only to help them in separating traffic.

(b) On 21 April the Soviets again issued the Western Controllers an advisory on Soviet traffic in the vicinity of the air corridors. Generally the advisory was of the same type issued by the Soviets on 13 March 1959. This time however, there was no request to advise the Soviets if western aircraft needed any altitudes above 10,000 or below 2,500 feet. There was amore specific statement as to Soviet traffic though. The Soviet Interpreter stated that there would be traffic crossing the corridors at 900 meters and that the Soviets would provide further information. He then requested that the Western Controllers attempt to prevent any "undue" altitude changes during the period covered by the advisory. Both the British and American Controllers then informed the Soviet Interpreter that they would continue to provide him with flight information in the normal manner. On three occasions the Soviets informed the American Controller of traffic crossing the South Corridor. Each advisory

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consisted of the estimated time of crossing, the altitude (900 meters in each case) and the position of the crossing. The first crossing was at Kotten, the next at Zerbst and the last approximately 35 NM southwest of Tempelhof. It was the impression of the American Controller that the Soviets were deliberately moving the crossings closer and closer to the Berlin Control Zone in order to see where and when it would be necessary for him to take action to move western traffic to avoid their traffic. At no time did the American Controller take action involving the Soviets. He alerted Berlin ATC to watch for unusual traffic in the corridors and closely monitored his flight plans for any possible conflicts. The alerting of Berlin ATC was done without the knowledge of the Soviets. Despite one query concerning the position of a PAA Clipper and a few muttered comments suggesting the alerting of Berlin ATC, at no time did the Soviets attempt to pass a formal flight plan to the American Controller. No advisories were given to the British Controller although the original warning covered all three corridors. Berlin ATC did not observe any unusual traffic in the corridors. This was very probably due to the low altitude of the crossing and their distance from Berlin. There were no reports of unusual activity from Western aircraft in the South Corridor.

(c) On 23 April the Three Western Powers passed approvals for the Soviet Foreign Minister to overfly the Federal Republic of Germany en route to and from the Geneva Conference scheduled for 11 May 1959. Also included was approval by the Federal Republic for the East German advisors to the conference to overfly West Germany en route to and from Geneva. The route for the East German advisors was not via the air corridors. It is Prague, Cheb, Bayreuth, Nurnberg, Dinkelsbuhl, Stuttgart, Rottweil, Zurich.

(d) On 29 April the Three Western Powers received an answer to the approvals of 23 April. The Soviets acknowledged receipt of the "letters." They then informed the Western Powers that there would be no German advisors with the Soviet delegation. They stated it was a well known fact that there would be an independent delegation from the German Democratic Republic going to the conference in Geneva on 11 May 1959.

(e) On 3 April the Soviet Interpreters twice made remarks indicating they felt they should be given prior notice of flights in the corridors. The American Controller pointed out to them that no such requirement exists in the Four Power Agreements. He stated we would continue to pass flight plans as soon as available as we have done in the past.

(f) On two occasions during April, Lt. Shustiski requested information from the American Controller about the working of the ICAO teletype network. He also requested the loan of the ICAO identifier book. His request was honored as it appeared to stem from an actual need relating to Soviet flights to the Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference.

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(g) On 25 April the British Controller told the American Controller that a few days previously the Soviet Controller, Captain Kotenko, had remarked that his tour of duty in Berlin had been extended for one year. Captain Kotenko has been very vociferous in the past in stating that he was leaving Berlin the 27th of May 1959. He appeared quite unhappy about this development.

(h) On 26 April Lt. Kriushin was observed by the American Controller to note "2.5 - 10.0" on a VFR local flight plan. He then suddenly exclaimed, "Oh I'm sorry!" and struck out the notation. It can only be assumed at this time that the Soviets now realize we honor the 10,000 foot limit in the Berlin Control Zone. Previously they have placed restrictions on local VFR flight plans. As of this writing, no more restrictions have been placed on such plans.

(i) On 5 occasions during April there have been difficulties with pilots attempting to file at altitudes above 10,000 feet in the corridors. A Polish aircraft filed for 15,000 feet. The British Controller advised London via teletype that there would be an indefinite delay. Berlin ATC was advised to clear the aircraft at some altitude below 10,000 feet. This was done with the Soviet Controllers present. A British Argonaut requested 15,000 feet inbound in the South Corridor. American Controller advised Berlin ATC there would be an indefinite delay but that 10,000 feet was immediately available. After conferring with British Controller, the American Controller told Berlin ATC the aircraft could enter the corridor at 1,000 feet on top. Frankfurt ATC advised that this could not be done since the Federal Republic does not recognize this type of clearance at night. The aircraft flew the corridor at 10,000 feet. A PAA Clipper requested 15,000 feet inbound in the South Corridor. The American Controller informed Berlin ATC that the aircraft could have 9,000 feet or 1,000 feet on top. The pilot changed to 1,000 on top and then asked Frankfurt ATC over the air why he had been cleared at 1,000 on top and not at 15,000 feet. He was referred to the American Element, Berlin Air Safety Center. This affair was subsequently handled by Mr. Deason, U.S. Administrator at Tempelhof. An Air Force aircraft requested 12,000 feet in the South Corridor after originally filing for 5,000 feet. The American Controller told Frankfurt ATC to inform the pilot that 9,000 feet was cleared for him. Frankfurt Control stated they had tried to give the pilot a lower altitude but that he would not accept it and could not state why he needed 12,000 feet. The American Controller then had the pilot informed there would be an extended delay. The Air Force aircraft then accepted a lower altitude. Another PAA Clipper requested 11,000 feet inbound in the South Corridor. The American Controller offered 9,000 feet. The pilot requested 10,000 feet which was approved.

(j) On 2 occasions during April the Soviets complained to the American Controller about aircraft flying over Soviet airfields within the Berlin Control Zone. Neither complaint resulted in further action by the Soviets. In neither case did the aircraft violate the safety zone of the Soviet airfield. In the second instance the American Controller specifically informed the Soviets that no regulation was being violated and that no action would be taken until one was.

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(k) April found the Soviet Controllers making 28 inquiries about allegedly uncoordinated traffic or checking border crossing times of Western aircraft. None of the allegations was proven correct.

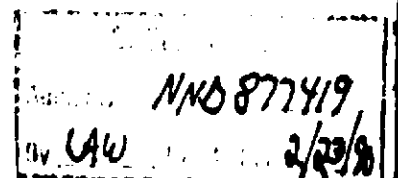
(1) On the 29 of April the Soviet Interpreter informed the Western Controllers that there would be a Soviet flight from Moscow to Geneva on 6 May returning to Moscow 7 May 1959. There would be a second flight on 9 May returning the same day, type of aircraft IL-18, Route: Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, Munich, Geneva and reciprocal return route. Purpose: Transportation for Soviet delegation to Geneva Foreign Ministers Conference. On 30 April the Soviet Chief Controller delivered the formal written over-flight request to the Western Controllers. Two hours later the Soviet Interpreter told the American Controller that Colonel Stromov wanted to stress that the routing was to be via Munich and not Nurnberg. The Soviets also requested immediate verbal notification as soon as the flight was cleared. As of this writing, nothing has been said to the Soviets in regard to this request, although Mr. Penberthy received notice from Bonn that the requested route was approved. Formal notification is awaiting coordination with the British and French at Bonn.

2. PROTESTS

(a) On 4 April the U.S. Chief Controller passed a reply to the Soviet protest of 27 March. The reply rejected the Soviet contention that corridor regulations preclude flights at high altitudes. The U.S. did not agree that the flight of the C-130 violated existing rules for corridor flights. The Soviets were reminded of the U.S. letters of June 6 and September 8, 1958 advising them that the U.S. did not recognize any limitation of flight altitudes in the corridors. They were also advised that flights at different altitudes do not require different procedures, that flight altitudes are governed by meteorological conditions and operational characteristics of the aircraft involved and that improved navigational facilities provide adequate safety for such flights. On the other hand the action of the Soviet fighters not only violated existing corridor regulations but also intentionally created the very safety hazard about which the Soviets were concerned. The U.S. recognized the mutual interest in safety of flight in the corridor and stated these interests would be fulfilled if the Soviets acted in accordance with existing corridor regulations and used the information provided for them by the Western Controllers to separate their traffic from Western traffic. It was also pointed out that flight information on this particular flight was passed to the Soviets over one hour prior to the aircraft's entering the corridor. The U.S. rejected the Soviet contention that a violation on the part of the U.S. occurred and stated that the implied threat of "undesirable consequences" by the Soviets was entirely unwarranted. Furthermore, United States aircraft would continue to fly through the corridors at whatever altitude was appropriate and with due notification of the Soviet authorities.

(b) Also on 4 April the Soviet Interpreter delivered an oral protest concerning the flight of AF 92688 which allegedly flew above 10,000 feet in the South Corridor. The Soviets requested action be taken to prevent violation of the 10,000 foot limit which has been established by long time practice.

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(c) On 7 April the American Controller delivered an oral reply to the Soviets denying their allegation that AF 03295 violated the boundaries of the South Corridor on 30 March 1959.

(d) On 10 April the U.S. Chief Controller orally replied to the Soviet oral protest of 4 April concerning AF 92688. The Soviets were informed that the aircraft was on a VFR clearance wherein the pilot is responsible for providing separation from other aircraft. The U.S. did not accept the unilateral limitation of altitudes by the Soviets and rejected all allegation that a violation occurred. The U.S. Chief Controller then strongly protested the action of the Soviet MIG fighters which harassed our aircraft and requested that the Soviet authorities insure that their aircraft cease such violations of corridor regulations as well as accepted standards of safe flying.

(e) On 15 April the Soviet Interpreter made an oral protest to the British Controller. The protest concerned the violation of the East German border by two unidentified jet fighters from the British Zone of Germany. The Soviets protested, requested measures be taken to prevent recurrence and stated such violations could have undesirable consequences for which the British would be entirely responsible.

(f) On 16 April the U.S. protested the deliberate, unwarranted and dangerous harassment of a C-130 en route to and from Berlin. The Soviets were reminded that they were duly notified of the flight in the customary manner. The U.S. insisted again that the Soviets take action to insure that flights operating in the air corridors in accordance with Quadripartite agreements will not be subjected to dangerous and unwarranted harassment. The Soviets were advised that the United States will hold them responsible for any consequences stemming from willful disregard of flight safety in the corridors.

(g) Also on the 16th of April the British Chief Controller made an oral reply to the Soviet oral protest of 15 April concerning the violation of the East German Border by jets from the British Zone of Germany. The British admitted the violation, which caused by radio difficulties, and stated that action was being taken to prevent a recurrence.

3. UNUSUAL INCIDENTS

(a) On 16 April the British Controller informed the Soviet Controller that a British York, in the Center Corridor, had had two Soviet twin jet aircraft pass across its nose within 300 feet. The British Controller took no further action. A few moments later the Soviet Interpreter requested the position of the incident and after approximately 45 minutes he advised the British Controller that the incident was being investigated.

(b) On the 26th of April the Soviet Interpreter requested that the American Controller confirm the altitude of PAA 680, inbound in the South Corridor. The American Controller checked and replied that the aircraft was just leaving 7,000 feet for 3,000 feet. This was passed to Karlshorst.

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A few moments later the Soviet Interpreter again requested a confirmation of PAA 680's altitude. He stated that he had been informed that the aircraft was at 3,800 meters. The American Controller again checked Berlin ATC and requested that the pilot of PAA 680 confirm his altitude prior to descending. The pilot confirmed his altitude as 7,000 feet. This was passed to the Soviet Interpreter who informed Karlshorst. No further comment was made on this flight at that time nor has any been made since.

(c) On 20 April Captain Kotenko passed the following remark to the American Controller when queried as to what written agreement the C-130 flights had violated. "Just wait, we have not had our last word, we will show you this is dangerous business." He also stated the subject of these flights will be discussed at the Foreign Ministers Conference, 11 May 1959.

(d) On 18 April Berlin Radar observed an apparent corridor violation by PAA 607, outbound in the North Corridor. The aircraft was steered back into the corridor by Berlin. As of this date there has been no indication that the Soviets are aware of the deviation. It appears probable that the cause of the deviation was thunderstorms.

4. SPECIAL FLIGHTS

(a) PAA N-90905 Berlin to Hannover, Cargo. 24 April, 1959.

5. FLIGHT FIGURES

During April 1959 there were a total of 3,264 flights in and out of Berlin via the air corridors, 1122 of which were via the U.S. (South) corridor. There were 84 flights in the local area. Total U.S. military aircraft flying to and from Berlin via corridors was 357. There were no accidents.

For the Charge d'Affaires ad interim:

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